



Cuban Cinema: Tomas Guiterrez Alea

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to be killing but not to kill. This possibility I have used in the film, it is not part of de Sade. And the third adaptation which I have borrowed from both Klossowski and Blanchot is the model of God they propose. All these Nietzschean supermen in using bodies as objects are just another form of Gods on earth. Their model is always God. In negating him they accept his existence.

Scatological themes have never been used in cinema; this will be the first graphic depiction of

this perversion on the screen. Undoubtedly it will arouse violent reactions. What does this theme represent in the film, metaphorically speaking?

Mainly this: that the producers, the manufacturers, force the consumer to eat excrement. All these industrial foods are worthless refuse.

How do you see this film's position in the framework of your opera omnia?

It is the first time I am making a film about the modern world.

MARGOT KERNAN

Cuban Cinema: Tomas Guiterrez Alea

As a teacher, Sergei Eisenstein once told his students that to construct a revolutionary emotional film the director must provide an understanding of emotional phenomena as well as showing how socio-historic forces influence human feelings. To Eisenstein, the "practical reconstruction of social activity" was the highest form of creation, and it occurred when the director was able to "reveal, manifest, and organize—in contradictions—the pictures and phenomena of class-reflected reality".¹

There are certain parallels between early Soviet films (1919-1929) and the films made during the first ten years of the Cuban revolution. Both revolutionary governments nationalized the film industry and set early priorities for film production as a cultural and educational necessity. But rather than making an overall comparison which wouldn't be justified, it might be useful to examine how three films produced by the Cuban state film institute (ICAIC) and directed by Tomas Guiterrez Alea present a specifically Latin-American view of "the phenomena of class-reflected reality"; and perhaps more important, to understand how these films function as a discourse which oscillates between a public and private view of events, between the overtly political and the apolitical position.

Alea is most widely known for his *Memories of Underdevelopment* [*Memorias del Subdesarrollo*] made in 1968. This was the first Cuban film to be seen widely in the United States, for until 1974 it was the only feature to be granted a license by the US Treasury Department for distribution here, a fact that to many radicals blunted its political edge.² Two other films by Alea which are not yet licensed for import into the United States, the earlier *Death of a Bureaucrat* [*La Muerte de un Burocrata*—1966], and *A Cuban Fight Against the Demons* [*Una Pelea Cubana Contra Los Demonios*—1972], show us a director working in a state-sponsored system to make films that reveal "the influence of socio-historic forces on human feelings," and that present a personal as well as a social sensibility.

Alea's film work began before the revolution, when he became a member of the group of young intellectuals that founded the cultural society "Our Times," which made the short experimental film, *El Megano*, denouncing the hardships of the charcoal workers in the Zapata swamps. The film was seized by the Batista government. Alea, born in Havana in 1928, graduated from the University of Havana Law School and attended the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematographia in Rome. He was one of the founding members of the Instituto



Sergio Corrieri in *MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT*

Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematographicos (ICAIC), and in 1960, made his first feature film, *Stories of the Revolution* [*Historias de la Revolución*]. His other films include *The Twelve Chairs* [*Las Doce Sillas*—1961] and *Cumbite* [1964].³

Alfredo Guevara, director of ICAIC, has pointed out that the films made there are not aimed only at Cuban audiences, but are produced for all of Latin America. “We do not direct ourselves only to a society that is building socialism, but also to a continent that fights for liberation as well as socialism. That has always seemed very important for us to keep in mind.”⁴

And it is important for us also to keep in mind as we consider the political function of the character of Sergio, the protagonist of *Memories of Underdevelopment*.

Sergio, originally created by Edmundo Desnoes in the novel on which the film is based, is a type more familiar to Latin-American liberals than working class radicals. Isolated by the revolution but unable to leave, Sergio mopes around his apartment, dabbling at writing and looking down at life on the street through a telescope from his apartment house balcony. Sergio, as played by Sergio Corrieri, is an impeccable recreation of what Fidel Castro has called the “lumpen bourgeoisie,” those pre-revolutionary businessmen whose social and economic interests centered around the United States rather than Cuba. As Sergio moves through Havana in a Kent sweat-shirt like a freeze-dried relic of the fifties, he is the personification of the faded Ivy League, nostalgic for the days when he was perfumed with

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Yardley aftershave and brushed with Colgate’s.

James O’Connor ascribes the listlessness and ineffectuality of the Cuban counter-revolutionary movement to the fact that the Cuban middle class was so integrated into the structure of foreign capitalism. He points to the fact that the Batista government encouraged the United States to maintain Cuba as a rich source of raw materials (particularly crude sugar) and a profitable market for exports. In pre-revolutionary Cuba, control by foreign capital limited the growth of processing plants, particularly in the mining and tobacco industries, and high tariffs controlled the amount of refined sugar the United States could import. In 1958, the US investment in Cuba amounted to over one billion dollars—a fact graphically illustrated in the Havana sequences of *Godfather II* when the representatives of American companies gather to cut up the sugary birthday cake labeled “Cuba.” “High level stagnation” are the words O’Connor uses to describe the old Cuban social order.⁵

To mobilize these contradictions in the political context of the film, Alea interpolates scenes of a culture alive to revolution—huge billboards decorated with brilliant patterns, and words by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, bookstores crammed with socialist texts, the people’s court where Sergio is tried, and found innocent, of rape—with sequences which frame Sergio in a detached or isolated position. This dialectic between a “white” passive sensibility and a “black” potent energy is most clearly seen in the first sequence of the film which shows a crowd of black people dancing joyously—shots ring out and a body is carried above the heads of the people. The next shot shows Sergio behind a glass wall at the Jose Martí International Airport, saying goodbye to his wife and parents as they leave the country on a flight to Miami.

Framed in isolation, Sergio’s contacts with other people are stunted, and Alea’s *mise-en-scène* presents Sergio as a kind of exotic specimen behind glass—at the airport, on his balcony, in a gallery. At one point he even describes himself as an enormous plant with huge leaves and no fruit. In particular, Sergio’s isolation reveals itself as a kind of psychosexual blight. After the scene

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where Sergio says farewell to his wife and parents at the airport, he returns to his empty apartment and begins playing with his wife's clothes, jewelry, make-up. The scene cuts to a flashback—Sergio and his wife are quarreling and he is recording the argument on tape.

His contacts with women are mediated by things—tape recordings, photographs, clothing. In the first scene in the empty apartment we see him sliding a pinup photograph of a woman down inside a glass vase. He asks his stunningly beautiful maid, played by Eslinda Nuñez, to bring him pictures of her baptism in a country stream, but when she does, the photographs don't match the Buñuelian sexual fantasies he had envisioned. Sergio's first sexual overtures to Elena, his working-class girlfriend, begin after he has dressed her in his wife's cast-off clothing.

For Latin American audiences, presenting a bourgeois hero as a case study of emotional and sexual retardation would seem a particularly effective device. As Sergio remembers the good old days of brand-names, the scene shifts to a flashback and he tells his restless wife: "I don't like natural beauty. I like women like you, who are made with good clothes, good food, make-up, massages. Thanks to that you have stopped being a slovenly Cuban girl."⁶ And except for the brief and abortive affair with Elena, all Sergio's sexual relationships are seen as memories or fantasies. Without things to brighten the edges and smooth over surfaces, Sergio's sexuality doesn't work.

In another flashback, we see the erosion of the young Sergio's love affair with Hanna, a Jewish refugee from Germany. Scenes of Sergio and Hanna together as lovers are intercut with shots of Sergio as merchant—opening a furniture store while a priest blesses the gathering, and later, working alone at his desk. After the last scene in the sequence, showing Hanna walking away, the film moves to the present. Sergio arrives at his apartment to find the fretful Elena looking for him. Sergio cannot understand why Elena resists his attempts to cure her "underdevelopment" as he drags her to art galleries and cultural centers like the Hemingway house. Elena also runs out on this man who sees women only through a grid of clothes and "culture." And it is this working-class



Elena and Sergio

woman who provides the most succinct description of Sergio: "You're not revolutionary, or counter-revolutionary. You're nothing."

Alea also has some fun with the new culture. Film-makers at ICAIC (including Alea himself) hang around watching sex clips from old American movies—Alea says that he is thinking of using them in a film and Sergio reminds him that it will have to have a meaning. Later Sergio visits a roundtable discussion on "Literature and Underdevelopment," featuring Edmundo Desnoes, author of the novel *Memorias del Subdesarrollo*. Desnoes remarks that although he looks white, since Americans call him a "spic" he is "really a Southern Negro, oppressed by the great white dream of the United States," but as he and the panelists continue to speak, a Negro man discreetly carries drinks in the background. And it is the American playwright, Jack Gelber, who speaks up against the traditional round-table format in which these authors are so comfortably maintaining their distance from the public.

But besides setting Sergio as a conventional bourgeois character, Alea also uses him to present specific bits of political information in the role of offscreen narrator. This first happens shortly after the beginning of the film. The structure of the opening scenes is diachronic—moving from Sergio at the airport to Sergio in his apartment to the flashback with his wife to Sergio in the present visiting a bookstore. The first inner title in the film: "Pablo," introduces a friend—and the following scenes also cut back and forth in time, from the old Havana with Sergio, Pablo,

and their wives at a nightclub, to Sergio and Pablo in 1962 (the actual time of the film) driving along the Malecon. Sergio introduces Pablo, voiceover, as his "friend for five years," and as they talk about cars, the scene cuts to a series of still photographs of Latin American children, their stomachs distended with hunger. Then the screen Sergio disappears and becomes an off-screen narrator, giving statistics about starvation in Latin America.

This shift in the level of discourse has the effect of making us re-examine the function of Sergio. On the dramatic level he acts as a character in a story—but he subverts this by stepping into a second role—that of political partisan. All the concrete facts about the revolutionary position (except for a brief television appearance by Fidel Castro) come from Sergio-as-narrator—just as all the negative information about underdevelopment comes from Sergio-as-character.

Another example occurs in the sequence which comes shortly after the "Pablo" passage, beginning with the title: "The truth of the group is in the murderer." As a detached voice on the sound track, Sergio reviews the history and testimony of the mercenaries captured during the Bay of Pigs invasion. Each member of the invasion force insists that he acted only for himself, that he is not a "political person," and Sergio reads their words as we see shots of murdered revolutionary soldiers and broken bodies lying along the country roads. Sergio's double function becomes fused when speaking as both dramatic character and political informant he says: "The others who came with Calvino don't recognize themselves as part of the system which entangles them in their own acts."

Sergio's double role is also discussed by Edmundo Desnoes in an article in *Cine Cubano*. "That is the tragedy of Sergio; his irony, his intelligence, is a defensive mechanism which prevents him from being involved in the reality. Titon (Alea) manages to explain this with pictures, in concrete cinematographic situations. The key of the character is that he does not assume his historical involvement; he cannot accept underdevelopment but is incapable of facing the necessary risks to overcome it."⁷ And in making

Memories of Underdevelopment, Alea has taken the risk of giving us a political film without heroes or heroines, with a logic that we must discover for ourselves.

The humor is ironic in *Memories of Underdevelopment*, but in Alea's earlier film, *Death of a Bureaucrat* (distributed in Great Britain by Contemporary Films), he flings a custard pie in the face of pomposity. The film's title credits are typed on a printed memorandum, and we hear typewriter noise on the sound track as the convoluted memo unrolls on the screen. The dedication takes up the most space, mentioning, among others: Buñuel, Oliver Hardy, Orson Welles, Buster Keaton, Jean Vigo, Georges Méliès, Elia Kazan, Akira Kurosawa, and Marilyn Monroe. With the final instruction that "copies be given out to all film distributors," the memorandum is signed "Tomas G. Alea, 9 March 1966."

The opening shot is a close-up of stone cherubs and funeral monuments. A man coughs, and then begins to speak: "Companeros." Pause. "Companeras." We see a group gathered around an open grave, and we learn that a worker is being buried, not an ordinary worker but a worker in the cause of socialist art, a great man, a real proletarian. The film cuts then to a series of short film clips that show his accomplishments. Jerkily animated in the prehistoric sci-fi style of Méliès, we see a huge metal contraption tended by its worker inventor—it's an art machine! As it belches out clouds of smoke, little busts of Lenin emerge and wobble down a rickety assembly line.

A cut back to the cemetery, where the funeral oration is ending with the words "May he pass on to an eternity of creative work." But just in case there is any trouble with eternity, the dead worker is buried with his party card in his hand. And later, when his widow and nephew go to apply for the worker's pension it turns out that without a party card, there is no proof of his death, and without proof of death, his widow cannot get a pension. So the nephew sets out for the cemetery to rescue the party card. There he runs into a festering jungle of rules and regulations, for in order to dig up a body he must first produce the

*Funeral
procession
in DEATH
OF A
BUREAUCRAT*



dead man's party card as proof of death.

The chief villain is the dapper, black-suited director of the cemetery (the film, incidentally, was made with the cooperation of officials at Havana's Colon Cemetery), the type who rubs his hands and screams "You're not behaving dialectically" when things go wrong. The pushing and pulling between the bureaucracy at the cemetery and the nephew, who has to secretly dig up his uncle and then find a way to get him back in the ground again, is Alea's story, and he tells it with a rich mixture of slapstick, satire, and film jokes ranging from Harold Lloyd to Jerry Lewis.

For instance—the waiter in the cafe who smiles to reveal a set of pointed Dracula fangs as he listens to the nephew plotting to dig up his uncle; the dog who trots out of the cemetery with a bone in his mouth à la *Yojimbo*; and the Buñuelian nightmares (priests, donkeys, and grand pianos) that haunt the nephew as he worries about getting his uncle back into his grave. Slapstick sequences are wonderfully paced and prolonged—like the epic battle that begins when a funeral procession cannot get into the cemetery. A Cadillac hearse

(it has a little skeleton charm dangling from the rearview mirror) is stripped to its transmission, wreaths become deadly weapons, and the head bureaucrat is attacked by an enraged, flower-swinging mob.

For the main target of the satire is the residue of the neocolonial bureaucracy that still lingers in the revolutionary society—like the scene at the Ministry of Health where long lines of people shuffle from one table to another while a sputnik conveyor belt totters along overhead to deliver messages; or the socialist art studio with its muscular director and clutter of white doves, peace torches, and massive athletes posing for posters.

And this satire has a concrete political function. In 1967, a year after the film was made, *Granma Weekly Review* published a two-part article entitled: "The Struggle Against Bureaucracy A Decisive Task." It dealt with a major Cuban problem at that time—the persistence of old bureaucratic ways inherited from the capitalist structures of the Batista regime.

During the fifties, the growth of a bureaucratic

class in Cuba was encouraged by the establishment of branch offices of US-based companies, and by the ancillary network of small companies and agencies that sprang up to serve them—licensing offices, trade schools, small banking firms, and insurance companies. The bureaucratic ranks that staffed these enterprises were swollen by people recruited from the country to fill this proliferating job market. But with the nationalization of foreign companies after the revolution, many of these bureaucratic workers stayed on and old methods continued, characterized by tedious paperwork, overstaffing, and hierarchical routines which stultified initiative and problem-solving.

The *Granma* article exhorted the people to be vigilant against the claims of the bureaucratic class. "We must check each paper, each form, and ask ourselves what purpose it serves. We must check the function of each employee and official, what he does, the whys and wherefores of his work. And together with this, we must analyze the entire structure of our State, from the organization and operation of each department to entire branches and ministries." Bureaucracy, *Granma* proclaims, is "a brake on revolutionary action."⁸

So Alea takes bureaucracy on a wild ride to the cemetery. At the final sequence, the cemetery director is accidentally killed in a night-time raid (staged by the nephew to get his ripe uncle back under ground again), and he is given a full-dress funeral ceremony with all the trappings (horse-drawn hearse, nodding black plumes) suitable for the death of a bureaucrat. By his use of film references and slapstick techniques which date back to Mack Sennett, Alea puts bureaucracy right into a crazy land of make-believe.

Alea's most recent work, *The Cuban Fight Against the Demons*, is a change of direction. Rather than political analysis through character or satire, he offers us a corrective interpretation of history, showing the social and economic forces at work in seventeenth-century Cuba when Spain and the Catholic Church controlled the island. The demons of the title are both physical and spiritual: on the one hand, the Spanish governors and the smugglers and pirates who come in their

wake; on the other, the religious superstitions that fostered the Inquisition.

The film, shot by Manuel Garcia Joya (mostly with a hand-held camera), opens in a mud-cake village square. We see Father Manuel, the parish priest, blessing a sugar mill as a fiesta begins. The camera moves into the white-hot sunbaked square as the workers hang back on the edge of the crowd. The landowners, richly dressed in white, stand around drinking and laughing. One of them, a tall man with a black beard, catches the eye of a woman dressed in black. They look at each other and then move apart. The man is Juan Contreras, and in his conversation with the priest we learn that he is one of the few in the village who claims to be a hedonist and skeptic.

Panicky runners burst into the square to announce that pirates are heading for the village. The pirates arrive and pursue the woman in black who hides in a cave where they find her. She is stripped and raped, and her body slides slowly out of the frame as the attack subsides. The sudden changes in movement patterns, the kinetic denegry that erupts out of the torpor of village life—these forces become attributed to demons.

The pirate's raid is followed with an attack by invisible predators. During a hellfire sermon in the church, the woman in black is seized with convulsions—her body coiling and twisting as if she were once again struggling in the arms of the pirates. Father Manuel barely manages to subdue her—and later, others in the village throb and twitch with raging energy. "Chaos rules over us," Father Manuel proclaims, "the chaos that leads to heretics, witches, and free women"—the wildness that Spain is trying to eradicate with the Inquisition.

But actually it is the island's economic and political structure that is chaotic. Sugar exports are threatened by smugglers who prey on shipping and then sell under the market price—and also by unhappy slaves who commit suicide in hopes that their bodies, along with their souls, will return to Africa.

The political system functions in a hierarchy of repressions, with the Spanish colonial officials at the top. The contradictions within the landowning class are personified by Juan Contreras, who

has the imagination but not the will to change, and by his crypto-fascist friend, Evaristo, whose solution to the slave suicide problem is to cut their bodies into four parts and hide them. Women and workers are shown as victims and victimizers—village men torment a simple-minded beggar, and throw wine into the faces of their women.

Fetid colonialism breeds fantasies and visions as substitutes for action. In a strong sequence we see Juan Contreras visit the cave of a native woman shaman who goes into a trance and speaks of “the river of native blood” to come. As her voice is heard over a totally black screen, tachistoscopic images flit by, one or two frames at a time, as the face of Che Guevara and images of revolutionary struggle burn briefly out of the darkness.

And the ending of the film also invokes magic. After Juan Contreras and a villager identified only as “the Portuguese” are killed by another group of pirates (these speak English with an American accent!), a beggar whom the Portuguese has defended against the villagers takes his body and covers it with green leaves. Father Manuel, who is leading his congregation to a new life in the interior loses his way in the woods and the demons attack him. He twists and crawls from tree to tree, and finally flings himself to his death. At that point, there is a cut to the Portuguese man rising from the dead. As he picks up the fallen Juan Contreras’s sword, the camera lingers on the beggar; he backs away, nodding, out of the square as the film ends.

In trying to deal with this dense, complicated work, I’m reminded of Stalin’s alleged comment to Eisenstein after a screening of *Alexander Nevsky*, “I see, Sergei Mikhailovich, you are a good Bolshevik after all”.⁹ In analyzing the 200-year-old economic and political background of the revolution, Alea has made a praiseworthy film which provides insight into economics and history, but it lacks the inventiveness and spontaneity which made *Death of a Bureaucrat* and *Memories of Underdevelopment* so instructive.

The formal structure that Alea uses in *Memories of Underdevelopment* is reversed in *The Cuban Fight Against the Demons*. In *Memories*,

the blank space at the center of the film—Sergio’s passivity—provides the ground for a definition of activity. The revolution is everything Sergio isn’t. But in *The Cuban Fight Against the Demons*, the characters at the center of the film (Juan Contreras, Father Manuel, Evaristo) exist as manifestations of imperialism; and the narrative, rather than developing a dialectic that points to a material change, presents only the grounds for class struggle.

Father Manuel, awash in his unacknowledged sexuality, sets out to lead his followers to a demon-free land, but along the way they start bowing down to him instead of God—a reflection of the shaman’s prophecy to Juan Contreras: “Some want to give you paradise in exchange for your real life.” Evaristo, the pompous be-ruffed landowner, organizes a white-robed Klan that burns crosses to quell the slave revolts. Although the skeptical Juan Contreras challenges the solutions put forth by Father Manuel and Evaristo, he has nothing to offer. He can see the visions of the future in the cave, but as a member of the ruling class he is isolated from activity.

The Cuban Fight Against the Demons works as a diagram of the forces at work in a society where class roles perpetuate economic and psychological dependency. In a revolutionary society, even a Sergio can be tolerated, but in a pre-technological colonial state where a small ruling class is itself dominated by a foreign ruler, human energies are driven underground or into repression. And Alea’s choice of locale is interesting. By setting his film in a Cuban village, he is focusing on the people who were later the first fighters for the revolution, for in rural Cuba, even into the twentieth century, foreign-owned mills ground 90% of the island’s sugar cane and one-fourth of the sugar-growing land was owned by American companies.¹⁰

Seeing these films as part of an inventive revolutionary film movement, and also in the context of political films from other countries, Alea’s work is particularly important. First of all, as opposed to film-makers like Costa-Gavras and Pontecorvo, he focuses on the problems and attitudes of his own country, for he is committed

to revolutionary ideology in a specifically Latin American context. Secondly, he has the wit and courage to avoid polemic in favor of speculative discourse. And thirdly, he presents the revolution as a continuing process which must continue to cast off the relics of neocolonialism, and which had its roots in an economic and political struggle which began 300 years ago.

NOTES

1. Vladimir Nizhny, *Lessons with Eisenstein*, translated and edited by Ivor Montagu and Jay Leyda (New York, Hill and Wang, 1969), p. 145.
2. Margot Kernan, "Treasury Ban on Cuban Films," *The Washington Post*, March 19, 1973. See also *Memories of Underdevelopment: The Revolutionary Films of Cuba*, edited by Michael Myerson (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1973), pp. 27-37.
3. *1st New York Festival of Cuban Films* (New York:

The Cuban Film Festival Committee and American Documentary Films, 1972), n.p.

4. *Ibid.*, "A Conversation with Alfredo Guevara," translated by Sandra Levinson, n.p.
5. James O'Connor, "Cuba: Its Political Economy," *Cuba in Revolution*, edited by Rolando E. Bonachea and Nelson P. Valdes (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor books, Doubleday & Company, Inc.), p. 80.
6. Myerson, ed., *Memories of Underdevelopment* . . . , p. 56. All further references to dialogue from the film are taken from Myerson.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
8. Cuban Communist Party, "Bureaucracy and Revolution," *Cuba in Revolution*, pp. 187-188.
9. Quoted by Dwight Macdonald in *Sergei Eisenstein: An Investigation into his Films and Philosophy* by Leon Moussinac (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1970).
10. Gilbert W. Merx and Nelson P. Valdes, "Revolution, Consciousness, and Class: Cuba and Argentina," in *Cuba and Revolution*, p. 89.

Reviews

NIGHT MOVES

Director: Arthur Penn. Script: Alan Sharp. Producer: Robert M. Sherman. Photography: Bruce Surtees. Editor: Dede Allen. Music: Michael Small. Warners.

Arthur Penn's previous movie, *Little Big Man*, probably stymied him as a film-maker. He took for his subject there, four years too early for the Bicentennial, nothing less than the detailed exploration of the American character as represented in a dazzling interweaving of history, societies, individuals, myths, and art forms, each multi-faceted in turn and, unlike our textbook-cleansed view of the American past, not all of it pretty. Ironically enough, his fine new film, *Night Moves*, does coincide with the beginning hoopla of the Bicentennial, and in it he fittingly returns to examine America, this time in the present.

Probably even more thoroughly than Altman, Arthur Penn understands the detective as an archetypal figure of American genre film-making and the influence of the sour new times, the deep

distorted web of American life, upon him. It is a simple fact that the man we mythically associate with the word "detective" can no longer exist. The last good detective movie was *Chinatown*, and much of its success can be traced to the fact that it was carefully sealed up in the past, with the host of associations, many of them moral and societal, that are subsumed by its thirties setting, plot, and characters. (Part of the essential sadness of nostalgia, and of people getting off on it half-wittedly, is its deep sense of loss and present-tense inadequacy.) The thirties detective, perhaps best personified by Bogart, could walk down those wet, mean (studio) streets, successfully navigating the underworld maze and discovering the truth and thus bring aid to the imperiled, because he was secure in his own moral cocoon. He remained untouched by the foulness around him—the sewers were shallow enough for his wading boots. He seemed a savvy man of the streets but was actually way above them. He was also something of an actor, taking on roles as